

WEXLER GALLERY



Biography

Malcolm Mobutu Smith's ceramic sculpture is an amalgam of graffiti writing, comics, craft history, hip hop and jazz. His work can feel playful and improvisational, a flawless confluence of various disciplines and cultures connecting seamlessly into intriguing new forms. However, he also offers cutting social critique, presenting racially charged imagery taken from pop-culture in order to illuminate underlying racism and hypocrisy in American culture. *"Motivated by these concerns and my own multi-faceted/ multi-cultural background, my research blends identity politics, CAD/CAM, printmaking, and drawing into a complex web of influences and passions."* —Malcolm Mobutu Smith

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Artist Statement

Malcolm Mobutu Smith is an artist and teacher, currently Associate Professor of Ceramic Art at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Mobutu earned his MFA from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in 1996 and studied at the Kansas City Art Institute and Penn State University where he completed a BFA in ceramics in 1994.

Mobutu Smith's works have been presented at The Luise Ross Gallery, New York City, the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, FuLed International Ceramic Art Museum, Beijing, China, the Haan Museum, the Indiana State Museum, and the New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum in Taiwan. Mobutu Smith has participated in numerous residencies, including Haystack Mountain School of Craft, Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts, and the Robert McNamara Foundation.

Malcolm Mobutu Smith's works are guided by improvisations that fluctuate between volumetric forms with graphic flatness. The vessels are inspired by the intersections of graffiti art, comic books, and playful organic abstraction. Generally, his ceramic forms rely on wheel-thrown and hand-built elements, commonly presented as abstractions of cups, bottles, and vases. In this making practice, Malcolm merges these forms with his passion for Hip Hop and Jazz as locations for invention and the unexpected. Malcolm's own multi-faceted/multi-cultural background blends identity politics, CAD/CAM, printmaking, and drawing into a complex web of influences and passions.